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RHMFISS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
RHMFISS/COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE PRIORITY
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SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

Please note: Block Quotes only today.

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

- [1](#)1. Iran
- [1](#)2. Mideast
- [1](#)3. Global Stock Market

1. Iran:

Summary:

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized: "In his last 10 months in office, Bush can still take concrete steps to restore and increase the momentum against the Iranian regime."

Block Quotes:

"Ten More Months"

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized (3/20): "The looming threat from Iran has all but dropped off the American radar screen. [In his Pentagon speech on Wednesday,] Bush referred to Iran twice in passing.... Bush is right and his critics are wrong on the debate over whether the removal of Saddam should be seen in the context of a wider war. But by this same token, if the U.S. fails to prosecute that wider war -- the central challenge of which is to prevent the current Iranian regime from going nuclear -- and if this failure can be traced to the war in Iraq, then that war was a failure, too.... Put simply, winning in Iraq is no substitute for winning against Iran. Indeed, winning against Iran is necessary for winning in Iraq, and elsewhere over the long term.... In his last 10 months in office, Bush can still take concrete steps to restore and increase the momentum against the Iranian regime, momentum that was largely dissipated by the bizarre intelligence report issued by his administration at the end of last year.... Next, Bush could initiate actions in international forums to punish Iran for incitement to genocide and for supporting terrorism, in addition to its defiance on the nuclear issue. Finally, Bush could meet with Iranian dissidents as a signal of stepped-up support for the Iranian people in their struggle to free themselves from a tyrannical regime that oppresses them and threatens the world. All this would demonstrate that Bush meant it when he said that 'The United States of America will not permit the world's most dangerous regimes to threaten us with the world's most destructive weapons.' While even with all this effort he might not succeed in fulfilling this pledge on his watch, he will at least have given his successor a solid base from which to do so."

2. Mideast:

Summary:

Washington correspondent Shmuel Rosner wrote in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: "There's no pressure, and nor should there be.... There's a lever, the Americans always have a lever, but the complaints against Israel are too minor to justify its application and no likely result will considerably change the situation."

Middle East affairs commentator Dr. Guy Bechor, a lecturer at the Interdisciplinary Center, wrote in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: " Hamas has adopted a tactic that is considered acceptable in the Middle East, a tactic that we have never understood: the tactic of symbols."

Ha'aretz editorialized: "On the agenda is a fragile, almost desperate attempt to advance negotiations with the Palestinian Authority.... At this critical time, it is incumbent upon us to bring Meretz into the government."

Liberal op-ed writer Yael Paz-Melamed commented in the popular, pluralist Maariv: "When the dignity of civilians, the overwhelming majority of whom are innocent, is trampled into dust, we cannot expect the dignity of Israeli civilians to be upheld. When a state loses the basic values of human dignity, it loses them when it comes to its own citizens as well."

Block Quotes:

I. "Pressure? What Are You Talking About?"

Washington correspondent Shmuel Rosner wrote in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (3/20): "A few weeks before the Annapolis summit in November, it was agreed that the renewal of the negotiations would be announced there. Prime Minister Ehud Olmert thought that was all that was required of him; Rice thought differently. She sought gestures to the Palestinians, and brought a list that included, among other things, nothing less than the release of 1,000 Palestinians. Olmert and his aides were shocked. The Americans didn't back down. Perhaps, Welch suggested, simply let the 1,000 longest-serving prisoners go? Foreign Ministry Director General Aharon Abramovitch, former director general of the Justice Ministry, explained that Israel does not have the death penalty, which means that implementing Welch's suggestion would in effect mean releasing 1,000 murderers. What moral justification is there for that, Abramovitch asked Welch. That is the lazy routine of American 'pressure.' There's no pressure, and nor should there be.... There's a lever, the Americans always have a lever, but the complaints against Israel are too minor to justify its application and no likely result will considerably change the situation."

II. "The Tactics of Symbols"

Middle East affairs commentator Dr. Guy Bechor, a lecturer at the Interdisciplinary Center, wrote in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (3/20): "We killed more than 100 terrorists, we say in wonder, how is that so many don't see that what the IDF did in Gaza was a victory? We killed over 100 terrorists, the IDF counts again, without realizing that we are broadcasting on a completely different frequency than the region in which we live.... Hamas has adopted a tactic that is considered acceptable in the Middle East, a tactic that we have never understood: the tactic of symbols. It declared victory and held a march of thousands to celebrate and commemorate the event. The very symbolism of the march created power, since the march makes it possible for millions of viewers in the world to feel that they are marching with Hamas, to feel a sense of identity and closeness. Such a march creates an event of its own. Hamas put on a show. An important rule: the symbol, the picture, the show, will always surpass words, and what we have are words. The show will always touch the emotions, and in the race between the mind and the emotions, emotions will always win, and Hamas knows how to do the job. Where is our visual show? Where is our march? We explain, we talk, but we have no symbols. David Ben-Gurion was good at this. His very figure was a symbol.... Today we are led by analytic statesmen. We scorn emotion, we consider it a weakness, something primitive, without realizing that in our region, a display of emotion, a show, an exhibit, a march, are a great advantage. This can be compared to a television appearance. A person can be analytical and well-informed, but if he doesn't know how to put on a television show properly, the viewer will be bored and he will not be invited back. And indeed, sometimes I watch Israeli ambassadors or representatives in the world toiling and explaining drearily away, and find it aggravating."

III. "Bring Meretz into the Government"

Ha'aretz editorialized (3/20): "Knesset Member Haim Oron's impressive victory in the internal elections for the Meretz party leadership once again raises the question of whether the party will join the coalition.... This is not the time for party considerations. On the agenda is a fragile, almost desperate attempt to advance negotiations with the Palestinian Authority, which maintains unsteady control of the West Bank alone. This option, for all its failings, is the only way open for the near future. This opportunity, like others in the past, should not be missed. Meretz's entry could breathe life into the government by liberating it from Shas's threats to dismantle it in the wake of diplomatic progress.... At this critical time, it is incumbent upon us to bring Meretz into the government."

IV. "Tibet Is Here"

Liberal op-ed writer Yael Paz-Melamed commented in the popular, pluralist Maariv (3/20): "Imagine what an outcry would have arisen around the world, and in Israel too, if we had read a report saying that the Chinese army was staging Qlive exercisesQ with dogs on

Tibetan residents, in order to check the dogsQ level of readiness for their missions.... This is the report that appeared this past Monday in Maariv: Dog trainers from the IDF Oketz ['Sting'] unit train their dogs at the roadblocks, causing unnecessary humiliation.

The IDF SpokespersonQs Office responded: The exercises are vital for maintaining fitness... Even under the threat of terror attacks, we must preserve our humane image. Ours and theirs. Not only because of the all-too-true cliché that every such dog, which jumps into a car, tramples the food and rummages through the Koran, manufactures the next suicide bomber, but also because of the heavy price that we pay for this, with compound interest, within the borders of Israel. When soldiers send a dog on a pair of elderly [Palestinians] over age 80 inside their home, and the dog tears off bits of flesh from these elderly people, while the soldiers stand by and watch, as was related this week on Israel TV's documentary

program, let us not wonder afterwards that violence against the elderly in Israel has reached alarming proportions. When the dignity of civilians, the overwhelming majority of whom are innocent, is trampled into dust, we cannot expect the dignity of Israeli civilians to be upheld. When a state loses the basic values of human dignity, it loses them when it comes to its own citizens as well."

13. Global Stock Market:

Summary:

Senior Editor and business correspondent Nehemia Shtrasler wrote in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: "When the U.S. economy slumps, Americans buy less, and Israeli exports hurt. The weak dollar is also hurting Israeli exports."

Block Quotes:

"Before the Showdown Begins"

Senior Editor and business correspondent Nehemia Shtrasler wrote in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (3/20): "Israel's market is wide open. Imports and exports are responsible for about 90 percent of Israel's gross domestic product. That is a lot. Not only does most high-tech export target the United States, this is also a main growth driver for Israel's economy. When the U.S. economy slumps, Americans buy less, and Israeli exports hurt. The weak dollar is also hurting Israeli exports.... Now is the time for cutbacks and reforms. If a plan is presented to the public, it will understand that the moment the government reduces its expenses, it would also be able to reduce taxes. The public will then not fear stepping up consumption and investments. Thus the slowdown will be more moderate and the economy won't stop in its tracks. Does [Finance Minister Roni] Bar-On have the political power to carry out such a plan? Will Olmert support him?"

JONES